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PAAUZYUW RUEHVIA3825 3410738-UUUU--RHEFLGX.

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

HEADER

P 070738Z DEC 05

FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1751

RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/WHITEHOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY

BT

CONTROLS

UNCLAS VIENNA 003825

DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR LISBETH KEEFE

OSD FOR COMMANDER CHAFFEE

WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

E.O. 12958: N/A

***** THIS IS A COMBINED MESSAGE *****

BODY

TAGS: KPAO, AU, OPRC

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: DECEMBER 06, 2005

RECONCILIATION FUND: ALMOST 132,000 PAYMENTS

1. THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE AUSTRIAN RECONCILIATION FUND PRESENTED ITS CLOSING BALANCE YESTERDAY, ORF ONLINE NEWS REPORTS. THE REPORT SHOWS THAT DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS ALMOST 132,000 PAYMENTS TOTALING ABOUT 352 MILLION EUROS HAVE BEEN MADE TO FORMER SLAVES AND FORCED LABORERS ON AUSTRIAN TERRITORY DURING THE NAZI REGIME. 29,536 APPLICATIONS FOR RESTITUTION WERE FILED WITH THE RECONCILIATION FUND SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT IN DECEMBER 2000, WRITES ORF ONLINE. IT WILL CONCLUDE ITS WORK BY THE END OF THIS YEAR.

EU BUDGET CUTS TO HIT FARMERS

2. EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT JOS MANUEL BARROSO HAS CALLED BRITAIN'S LATEST EU BUDGET PROPOSALS UNACCEPTABLE. BRITAIN HAS OFFERED TO RETURN SOME OF ITS ANNUAL REBATE AS PART OF A PACKAGE, WHICH WOULD CUT AID TO RURAL AREAS. POLAND, HUNGARY AND FRANCE HAVE ALSO REJECTED THE DEAL,

RELEASED IN FULL

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page 2

UNCLASSIFIED

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ACCORDING TO ORF RADIO. MASS-CIRCULATION DAILY "KURIER" AND CENTRIST DAILY "DIE PRESSE" MEANWHILE REPORT ON THEIR FRONT PAGES THAT THE BRITISH PROPOSAL WOULD PRIMARILY AFFECT THE FARMERS AND THE NEW EU MEMBERS IN EASTERN EUROPE. THE "PRESSE" ADDS THAT THE PLAN ALSO HAS THE AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT IN A TIGHT SPOT, AS IT WILL HAVE TO BALANCE EFFORTS AT ECONOMIZING AND THE INTERESTS OF THE POPULATION.

PLASSNIK HOPING FOR BETTER EU-OSCE COOPERATION

3. SEMI-OFFICIAL DAILY "WIENER ZEITUNG" QUOTES FOREIGN MINISTER URSULA PLASSNIK AS EMPHASIZING AT THE MEETING ON MONDAY OF OSCE FOREIGN MINISTERS IN LJUBLJANA: "DURING AUSTRIA'S EU PRESIDENCY IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2006, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OTHER MEMBER STATES, WE WILL WORK TOWARDS FURTHER IMPROVING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND THE OSCE." ACCORDING TO PLASSNIK, THE STABILIZATION OF THE BALKANS IS A "JOINT PRIORITY" FOR THE EU AND THE OSCE, WHERE "A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT ISSUES ARE UP FOR DECISION NEXT YEAR, WHICH WILL CALL FOR THE COMMITMENTS OF ALL ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN THE REGION."

SADDAM HUSSEIN TRIAL TO CONTINUE

4. THE TRIAL OF FORMER IRAQI LEADER SADDAM HUSSEIN WILL CONTINUE TODAY DESPITE A CHALLENGE TO ITS LEGITIMACY BY THE DEFENSE TEAM. SEMI-OFFICIAL DAILY "WIENER ZEITUNG" HEADLINES "SADDAM'S LAWYERS REBELLING" AND WRITES ABOUT A "NEW CLAT AT THE TRIAL." GIVEN SADDAM HUSSEIN'S VOCIFEROUS INTERRUPTION OF THE PROCEEDINGS AND THE DEFENSE LAWYERS' ALLEGATIONS, JUDGE RIZGAR MOHAMMED AMIN OFTEN SEEMS SOMEWHAT HELPLESS IN THE FACE OF WHAT THE DAILY LABELS THE "REBELLION IN HIS COURTROOM." THE COURT YESTERDAY HEARD TESTIMONY OF THE TORTURE OF MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN INFLICTED DURING HIS RULE.

RICE STARTS COUNTERATTACK IN EUROPE

5. US SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE IS IN BERLIN FOR TALKS WITH GERMAN CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL. ACCORDING TO SEMI-OFFICIAL DAILY "WIENER ZEITUNG," THE TRIP IS LIKELY TO BE THE TOUGHEST YET FOR RICE, AS MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

UNCLASSIFIED

page 3

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

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ARE EXPECTED TO BE DOMINATED BY REPORTS OF CIA-TRANSPORTED TERROR SUSPECTS THROUGH EUROPE. ORF RADIO STATES THAT BERLIN WANTS AN EXPLANATION REGARDING MORE THAN 400 FLIGHTS AND LANDINGS ON ITS TERRITORY. BEFORE LEAVING WASHINGTON, RICE SAID THE US DID NOT CONDONE TORTURE. HOWEVER, SHE DEFENDED THE PRACTICE OF MOVING TERROR SUSPECTS ABOARD FOR INTERROGATION. THE "TERRORISTS OF THE 21ST CENTURY DO NOT FIT EASILY INTO TRADITIONAL SYSTEMS OF CRIMINAL OR MILITARY JUSTICE, WHICH WERE DESIGNED FOR DIFFERENT NEEDS. WE HAVE TO ADAPT. OTHER GOVERNMENTS ARE NOW ALSO FACING THIS CHALLENGE," THE RADIO QUOTES RICE. THE "WIENER ZEITUNG" SUGGESTS THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAS GONE ON THE OFFENSIVE IN THE BELIEF THAT THE CRITICISM OF REPORTED CIA OPERATIONS MARKS A RENEWED SURGE OF ANTI-AMERICANISM IN EUROPE.

***** START OF SECTION 2 *****

DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR LISBETH KEEFE
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TV: CIA COVERT PRISONS IN EUROPE CLOSED

6. ACCORDING TO A REPORT ON US TELEVISION NETWORK ABC, TWO SECRET PRISONS OPERATED BY THE CIA IN POLAND AND ROMANIA HAVE ALLEGEDLY BEEN CLOSED DOWN, A FEW DAYS AHEAD OF US SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE'S EUROPE TOUR. ORF ONLINE WRITES THAT ABC REFERRED TO STATEMENTS FROM FORMER AND CURRENT CIA AGENTS, WHO SAID ELEVEN SUSPECTED AL QAEDA MEMBERS HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED FROM EASTERN EUROPE TO A CIA FACILITY IN AN UNNAMED NORTH AFRICAN COUNTRY. THE CIA HAS DECLINED TO COMMENT ON THE ISSUE, AND POLAND'S DEFENSE MINISTRY HAS REJECTED THE REPORTS AS UNTRUE. THE ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT, MEANWHILE, IS SAID TO CONSIDER LAUNCHING AN INVESTIGATION, ORF ONLINE SAYS. AUSTRIAN RADIO EARLY MORNING NEWS "MORGENJOURNAL" ALSO REPORTS ON THE ISSUE, AND COMMENTS THIS IS LIKELY TO MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR SECRETARY RICE TO CONTINUE TO ARGUE THAT THE "SECRET PRISONER TRANSFERS ARE PERMISSIBLE AND SERVE THE FIGHT AGAINST TERROR."

FIGHT AGAINST TERROR NO EXCUSE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

UNCLASSIFIED

page 4

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

7. IN AN INTERVIEW ON ORF RADIO'S EARLY MORNING NEWS "MORGENJOURNAL," THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION'S SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR ON TORTURE MANFRED NOVAK STRESSED THAT THE "FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM IS NO EXCUSE WHATSOEVER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. ON THE CONTRARY: IT CAN ONLY BE PURSUED CONVINCINGLY BY STATES THAT OBSERVE FUNDAMENTAL INTERNATIONAL NORMS REGARDING THE RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS." FURTHERMORE, NOVAK CONTINUED, "WE CAN'T HAVE PEOPLE DISAPPEARING IN THE HEART OF DEMOCRATIC EUROPE, AND I EXPECT THE US SECRETARY OF STATE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THIS MATTER." ACCORDING TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS ALMOST 800 CIA PLANES WITH TERRORIST SUSPECTS ON BOARD HAVE STARTED OR LANDED IN EUROPE, ORF RADIO ADDS. MASS-CIRCULATION TABLOID "KRONEN ZEITUNG" QUOTES NOVAK AS CLAIMING ON MONDAY'S ORF TV LATE NIGHT NEWS PROGRAM "ZEIT IM BILD II" THAT THE US GOVERNMENT "HAS BY NO MEANS ALWAYS ADHERED TO ITS CONSTITUTION, NOR TO INTERNATIONAL TREATIES."

FRATTINI WANTS ANSWERS FROM US

8. SAYS MASS-CIRCULATION DAILY "KURIER," PUBLISHING AN INTERVIEW WITH EU COMMISSION VICE-PRESIDENT FRANCO FRATTINI ON ALLEGATIONS REGARDING THE EXISTENCE OF COVERT CIA PRISONS ON EUROPEAN SOIL. THE "KURIER" WRITES FRATTINI UNDERScoreD THE IMPORTANCE OF A BALANCE BETWEEN COUNTER-TERRORISM MEASURES AND THE ADHERENCE TO BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS: "I EXPECT INFORMATION ON TORTURE AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS (FROM US SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE). I WANT TO KNOW TO WHAT EXTENT AND WHY THIS IS CONSIDERED TO BE NECESSARY," THE DAILY QUOTES THE COMMISSIONER. HOWEVER, FRATTINI UNDERScoreD THAT DIFFERENCES WITH THE US ARE NOT THE OBJECTIVE: "FOR EUROPE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO POINT OUT THAT WE ARE IN THE SAME BOAT WITH THE US. WE ARE ALL THREATENED BY TERRORISM. LIKE THE US, EUROPE IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY, FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS." THAT IS WHY EUROPE CANNOT ACCEPT TORTURE, FRATTINI STRESSED. ACCORDING TO THE "KURIER," FRATTINI CONTINUES TO ARGUE EU MEMBERS SHOULD EXPECT SANCTIONS, SHOULD ANY EVIDENCE BE FOUND THEY TOLERATED CIA PRISONS ON THEIR TERRITORY.

KILNER
ADMIN

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page 5

UNCLASSIFIED